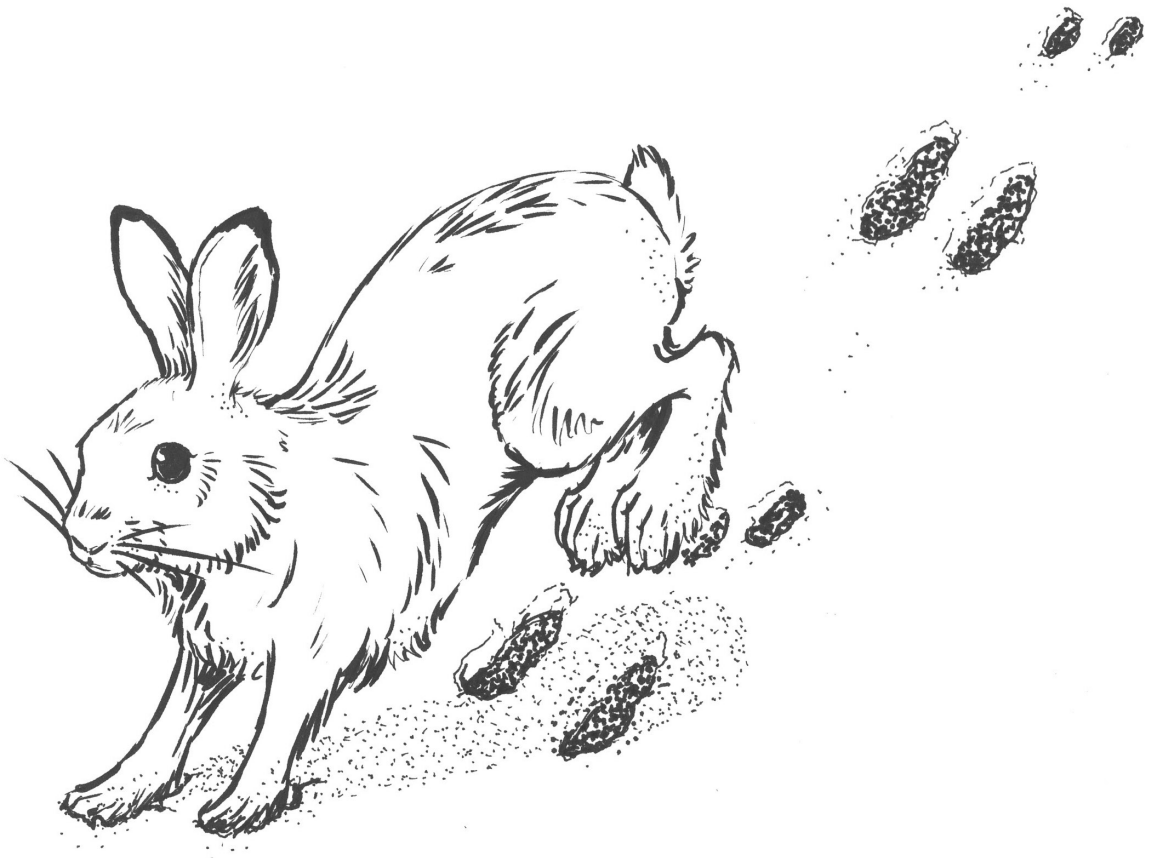
Pathways

THE ONTARIO JOURNAL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION
Winter 2020, 32(2)



ISSN: 0840-8114

Pathways

COEO

Formed in 1972, the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes safe, quality outdoor education experiences for people of all ages. We achieve this by publishing the *Pathways* journal, running an annual conference and regional workshops, maintaining a website, and working with kindred organizations as well as government agencies. Members of COEO receive a subscription to *Pathways*, as well as admittance to workshops, courses and conferences. A membership application form is included on the inside back cover of this issue of *Pathways*.

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Pathways is published four times a year for members of the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO).

Pathways is always looking for contributions. Please contact the Chair for submission guidelines.

Opinions expressed in *Pathways* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the *Pathways* Editorial Board or COEO.

ISSN: 0840-8114
Pathways is printed on FSC recycled paper.

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Features

Columns

Editor's Log

The *Pathways* column INTERSECTIONS has been a long-established placeholder within our journal where integrated curriculum programs have been showcased, along with related research, innovative instructional ideas and student perspectives. Over the years, these articles have focused exclusively on secondary school ICPs with an outdoor focus (as was probably the original intention of the Pathways Editors who developed this column), and while worthy of sustained investigation, perhaps there has been a missed opportunity to highlight some of the amazing outdoor learning and program development taking place at the elementary level. With many elementary educators utilizing interdisciplinary approaches when teaching outdoors, within their communities, and about the environment, there is certainly more exciting work that also deserves our attention. And so, this is an invitation to those who teach at the elementary level and/or conduct research to share their work around curriculum integration and outdoor and experiential education.

I am again enthusiastic to share the latest issue of *Pathways* with readers. Wintertime and winter weather (or sometimes the lack thereof) is taken up by several authors. First, Zabe MacEachren explores skiing and snowshoeing activities for no-snow days. Zabe shares a number of activities inspired by books, historical events and experimentation that can be taken up when there isn't enough snow on the ground to go skiing or snowshoeing. McMaster University students Mary Anne Schoenhardt and Emily Cowley have generously opened their reflective journals to readers, as they explored Winter as Place as part of an undergraduate field course. Next, Lázaro Mediavilla Saldaña, Virginia Gómez Barrios, and Vicente Gómez Encinas — members of a research group from the Faculty of Sports Sciences at the Polytechnic University of Madrid — present an article describing their research project that delves into the influence of the natural environment on student learning. This article is followed by the third in a series of articles by Chris Peters, exploring the concept of Hjemstedslaere, or Homestead Knowledge, its place in Newfoundland's educational history, and potential use in schooling today. Bob Henderson then shares some BACKPOCKET wisdom about the value of two traditional winter clothing items — the Anorak and Chopper Mitts, while Donna Wong and David Chorney discuss the benefit of free play outdoors on childhood development. This issue concludes with a lovely poem courtesy of Naomi McIlwraith — "For Every Friend, For Every Fire".

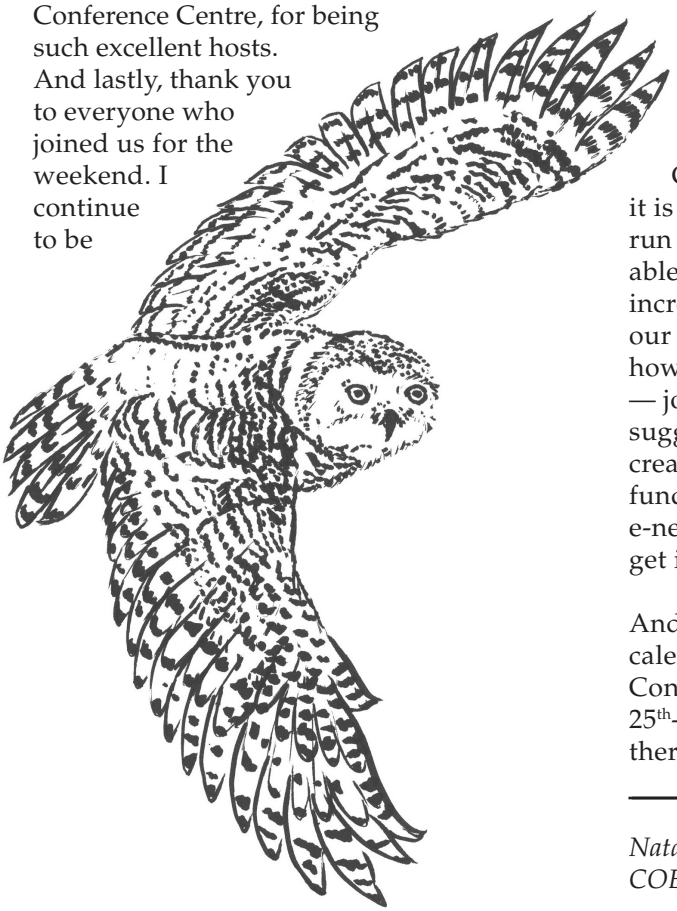
Kyle Clarke
Editor

Sketch Pad – The art for this issue of *Pathways* was generously contributed by Zabe MacEachren (pages 5-9) and M Nowick (cover and pages 2-3, 16, 28, 30-31 and 36). Zabe is the coordinator of the Outdoor and Experiential Education program at Queen's University. M is currently a teacher candidate within the Lakehead University Faculty of Education in Orillia, Ontario.

President's View

I always find that there's a cold stillness to winter, yet I find it presents so many new ways to enjoy my time in nature—especially when I'm lucky enough for the snow to stick around for a while. I hope you're able to layer up and head outside throughout the season.

I want to give a big thank you to everyone who made this year's Make Peace With Winter a success. As always, I had a wonderful weekend learning, chatting, and dancing up a storm with everyone in attendance. I want to be sure to acknowledge the hard work of the conference Conference Committee: Ben Blakey, Minka Chambers, Kyle Clarke, Sandra Dabrowski, Claire Kemp, April Nicolle, M Nowick, Karen O'Krafka, Aaron Parcher, and Barb Sheridan. This team did an incredible job of organizing a weekend that had us learning from one another, connecting with likeminded and passionate educators, and enjoying all that winter has to offer. I would also like to thank the staff of our host site, Bark Lake Leadership and Conference Centre, for being such excellent hosts. And lastly, thank you to everyone who joined us for the weekend. I continue to be inspired by the knowledge, enthusiasm, and supportive nature demonstrated by the members of our COEO community.



I am now looking forward to our next event, the Ontario Wilderness Leadership Symposium, which will take place at Norval Outdoor School on May 8-10th, 2020. OWLS is a smaller, low-cost conference that aims to support the development of emerging wilderness trip leaders. The weekend provides attendees opportunities for relevant leadership and skills-based training, as well as a chance to network with others employed in this unique field and explore a variety of potential future career paths. Having participated in OWLS as both an emerging professional and a mentor I can truly speak to the value of this event. I encourage any young adults with experience leading wilderness trips to apply to participate in this annual professional development event, and those who are keen to serve as a mentor at this event to email owls@coeo.org to get in touch.

Finally, now the we are settling into the new year I ask that you consider how you can become more involved in the COEO community. With all that we do it is hard to believe that we are a volunteer-run organization, but we would not be able to make so much happen without the incredible volunteer efforts of so many of our members. I urge you to think about how you can give back to this community — join a conference planning committee, suggest a potential future host site, write or create art for Pathways, contribute to our fundraising efforts, and be sure to read the e-newsletter each month for more ways to get involved.

And of course, make sure to mark your calendars for our 2020 Annual Fall Conference, which will be held September 25th-27th at RKY Camp. I hope to see you there!

Natalie Kemp
COEO President

Skiing and Snowshoeing Activities for No-Snow Days

By Zabe MacEachren

Whether due to climate change or your proximity to a southern Ontario great lake, it is becoming increasingly difficult for many outdoor educators to plan a full day of cross-country skiing or snowshoeing activities. As an avid cross-country skier, snowshoer, and outdoor educator, I was disappointed and frustrated at having to cancel winter activities and implement a 'no snow/rainy day' substitute plan. Seeking a solution to the problem, I began to collect children's picture books that involve winter in the attempt to improvise better activities that would cover content related to actual snowshoe and cross-country skiing experiences. Many of these activities evolved from Queen's University's outdoor and experiential education teacher candidates' critique of these books and our collective brain storming of ways to extend this literature in a manner relevant to snow, or 'no snow' days.

Over the course of 18 years dealing with increasingly variable snow conditions and the constant need to implement substitute activities, I have nearly come to prefer the substitute plan because of the rich historical and cultural information it allows me to convey regarding snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. The following section provides an overview of the books I have used, the activities they have inspired, as well as diagrams of a few self-made teaching aids and the pertinent technical information.

Books and Related Activities

The Race of the Birkebeiners by Lise Lung-Larsen

This story is based on a historic event in which an infant prince was carried on skis throughout the countryside of Norway during blizzards in the effort to protect him from unfriendly rivals. Today, the story is acknowledged by ski events in both Norway and places where Norwegians have settled (e.g. Alberta). Thousands of participants come out to ski in the events annually. The final pages of the book describe a metaphysical happening that you might, upon consideration, choose to explore or ignore.

Activities: (1) In the story the baby must be fed, of course. In Norway, the snacks at children's ski events commonly include tangerines and chocolate, while at longer ski events hot blueberry soup is served. In our classes, we provide similar healthy snacks and use heated blueberry juice rather than hot chocolate drinks. (2) The name Birkebeiner translates into English as birch shins, and describes a traditional way of making armor similar to today's gaiters. Students can discuss the importance of gaiters in deep-snow skiing and can practice securing fabric and/or birch bark to their own shins. The bark can be used later to start a fire serving to remind students of the importance of carrying fire starters when outdoor traveling. (3) Participants in the Canadian Ski Marathon silver level are required to carry a ten-pound pack. The weight is meant to simulate that of an infant. Optionally dolls can also be carried by younger students. (4) Show pictures of large ski events and discuss any equivalent winter cultural event held in Canada for snowshoeing. (5) Design a movement pattern for two groups simulating the pattern skied by the two groups in the story. (6) Images from the book show how in the early days of skiing only one ski pole was use. Have students move up an incline and compare the effort required using either one, or two poles. After the exercise, I have students explore the historical development of winter travel innovations. Similarly, in the past, one ski was deployed to glide forward while the other had a skin placed fur side down allowing its hairs to provide traction and prevent slipping. Explain how skins work on today's telemark skis linking

their function with that of glide, sticky kick waxes and that of the patterned treads on wax-less skis.

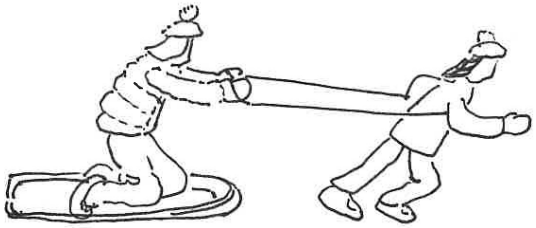
Mara's Skis by Jean E. Pendziwol

This story is about a young Finnish girl who lacks confidence and whose father gives her encouraging words to grow strong. One day Mara helps rescue a logger who has fallen through the ice. She gathers up her strength and knowing she is small and light she skis closer to the man and passes him her ski pole. The story lends itself well to a discussion of ice safety and what to do when one has fallen through the ice. Additional ice safety information, including discussion of clothing and hypothermia, can be found online in a series of videos prepared by Dr. Gordon Giesbrecht, aka Dr. Popsicle.

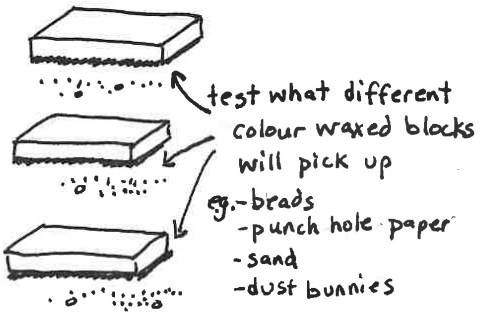
Activities: (1) Have students lie face down on a plastic sled and use old or broken ski pole tips to pull themselves along the ground (or on minimal snow). This is a great upper body workout and can be made more strenuous by pulling up an incline. The activity emphasizes the strength required to lift oneself out of an ice hole. (2) Discuss saunas and their role in various cultures past and present. (3) Research and practice effective methods to warm up that lumberjacks and other people use in cold weather emergencies (e.g. make a hypothermic wrap and make shift stretcher). (4) Discuss the dangers and occurrence of weak ice and practice planning a safe route for a winter camping trip. For more information on ice safety and route planning see *The Snowwalker's Companio*n (Conovers, 1995).

Marven of the Great North Woods by Kathryn Lasky

A true account of a ten-year-old who has to ski alone across a lake to a logging camp to escape an influenza outbreak. The protagonist, Marvin earns his keep at the logging camp by determining each logger's pay. The story centres on his friendship with a lumberjack. The book provides an informing narrative that illustrates the role of skiing and snowshoeing in people's daily life. Teachers could use this book to introduce hygiene and discuss the importance of flu shots to students.



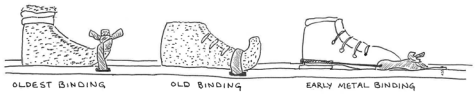
Activities: (1) Latkes (potato pancakes) are carried in the boy's hat and pocket. Have students make latkes and wrap them so they can carry them (or another snack) on their head, under their hat. (2) Create a corresponding worksheet that simulates the math problems used to determine each lumberjack's pay. (3) Learn about life in a logging camp and sharing fun facts (e.g. pancakes were called stove lids.) and reenact lumberjack songs and dances. One fun example is jumping over your axe (use a stick of similar length) while it is held by both hands.

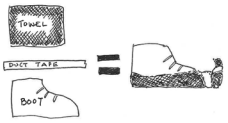


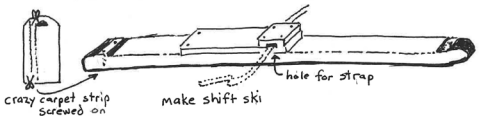
Ollie's Ski Trip by Elsa Beskow

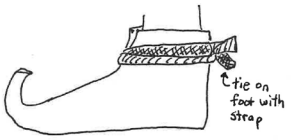
The story, first published in 1907, is an account of a boy who is guided by Jack Frost to the land of the Snow King. The enchanting illustrations and storyline describe the children making skis and ski boots with upturned toes, in the traditional Scandinavian manner. Teacher candidates appreciate the story's emphasis on handwork and can pose questions to explore the story's portrayal of outdated gender roles.

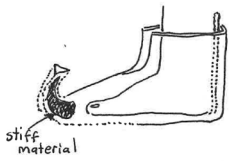
Activities: (1) Place students in groups according to similar shoe size. Have the students work together to add an upturned toe to some footwear that can be attached to an improvised ski. I provide terry cloth towels and duct tape to each group so they can make their own. Another option is to make improvised "elf" shoes for this activity. See diagram for a possible multi size pattern. (2) Have students work together to determine ways to lash a stiff upturned toe of a boot to a wooden (make-shift) ski to allow for effective skiing. In this activity, students can explore the evolution of ski binding technology and field repairs. (e.g. difference between why some ski bindings use attached heels and others don't; provide examples of broken plastic and metal bindings and discuss what to do in the field when modern bindings fail. (3) Create a picture resource of traditional Sami ski boots. Explain how these boots were made from the head hide of the caribou because it was stiffer, serving to mimic the flexibility of leather and the stiffness of rawhide. Sometimes the fur was left on the sole of the boot to serve as tread to grip the snow (Kim, 2015). (4) Shaping wooden skis

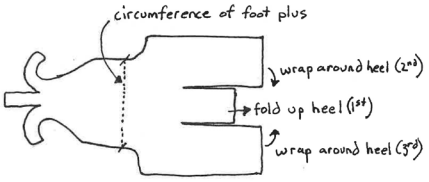




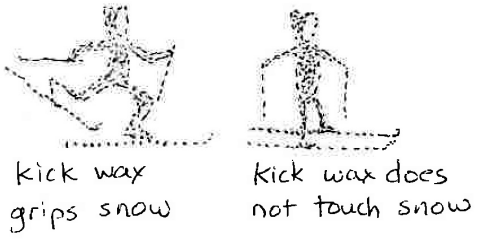








that fit a user's weight requires proficiency in bending wood. Discuss the role of ski camber and have students determine what skis fit them and the kick zone in non-wax skis (McBike, 2003). (5) Explore further how the "arch" or camber in skis works by designing an experiment to determine what various types of ski waxes will either stick or glide over snow. (See figure example). (6) After exploring the role of camber, students should be able to demonstrate how to attach their skis together to avoid damage during long-term storage. (6) Group cooperation, like that in the book, can be modelled with an exercise in which two long boards (with minimal bindings) are moved as if skiing together on one set of skis.



Children of Lapland by Bodil Hagbrink

This book is filled with beautiful illustrations that allow for the comparison of the winter activities of Indigenous-families in Lapland and North America. The story follows the annual migration of Lapp families as they lead reindeer herds to traditional grazing islands.

Activities: (1) Have students tie a slip knot, make a lasso and attempt to lasso antlers placed on the ground at varying distances. This activity emphasizes proficient knot tying skills in order to reduce the amount of time spent with mitts off in the frigid climates. (2) Have one or two students pretend they are a reindeer and pull another student who is sitting or kneeling on a toboggan. This works even if there is little snow on the ground.

Trouble with Trolls by Jan Brett

A young girl is skiing with her dog when she encounters trolls that take her clothing. She cleverly tricks them into giving her clothes back and quickly skis away with her dog. The book is richly illustrated with Scandinavian designs. The archetypic portrayal of trolls in European-based stories can be discussed, and the troll's common bully-like behavior can be explored.

Activities: (1) This book is well suited for stressing the importance of proper winter dress. Create or incorporate activities that allow students to earn back the clothing the impish trolls have taken.

Snowshoes

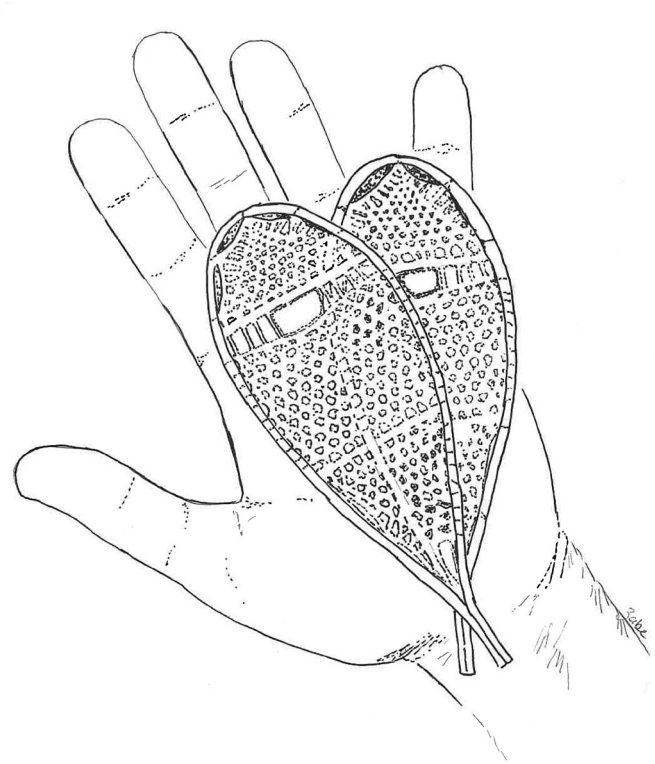
Winter travelers should understand the advantages and disadvantages of using either ski or snowshoe technologies in different terrains. Osgood and Hurley (1971) emphasize the importance of both travel technologies: "Archeologists have been unable to date the origin of either skis or snowshoe, but the best evidence suggests that the first device to serve as a foot-extender for easier travel over the snow was originated in Central Asia about 4000 B.C. Thus, the snowshoe/ski is one of the oldest inventions of man [sic], ranking in importance with the wheel" (p.11). Exploring the relationship between the cultural and geographic factors that shaped the development and evolution of the two travel technologies in different northern regions is a rich and worthwhile topic to explore.

There is a surprising lack of reference material on the topic of snowshoeing, particularly books written for children. Here I draw upon my decades of experience participating and leading extended winter camping trips in Canadian Shield country. I encourage teacher candidates to explore and share their subjective experience and knowledge in comparing skiing with snowshoeing. Related topics students can explore are: explain the lack of snowshoeing literature in Canada; with a limited equipment budget, would they purchase skis or snowshoes for their class and why (defend their choice). Also

consider why skiing an Olympic event and snowshoeing is not; what do they know about the history of Canadian snowshoe clubs that were popular in the past? Outdoor educators should recognize how the winter experiences they offer students play a critical role in shaping the Canadian cultural understanding of themselves as northern people.

It is intriguing to note that the oral history of the Anishinabe people states that they used skis prior to using snowshoes (Benton-Benai, 1979). The Ski Museum in Oslo, Norway describes the first skis as a type of snowshoes. Considering the apparent paradox, I began to explore why two different regions of the north developed two different travel technologies.

Early skis and snowshoes were both made of flat, split pieces of wood that provided a wide footprint which aided in supporting the traveler to move atop of the snow (floatation). The present-day skier might recognize the similarity in size and shape between the early skis and what we today refer to as snowshoes. In contrast,



the first snowshoes were made of solid wood having the appearance of short skis today. After gaining first-hand experience during extended winter travel trips in both Canada and Norway, I moved beyond the terminology associated with the devices and explored why two different Indigenous northern cultures developed different technology to accomplish the same aim. Reflecting upon my experience and paying particular attention to regional snow and travel conditions, I began to recognize how and why different design innovations resulted in today's skis and snowshoes.

I compared the terrain and snow conditions that I had encountered during a few ski trips across Norway and several extended trips snowshoeing in the Canadian bush. The land in each region had nuances that would encourage a maker to adapt either a ski or snowshoe design. The landscape of Norway is well suited to travel by ski due to its dominant open terrain, good drainage, and a prevailing climate that keeps snow cold and packed. In Norway, I never encountered slush while crossing large lakes, and only on my last day of a seven-day trip did I have to travel through trees, and these were so well spaced that it was easy to ski between them. The snow conditions in Norway allowed me to move with relative ease, even if I stepped off the trail or stood in the snow while wearing just ski boots. The glide provided by skis made travel in this landscape highly efficient.

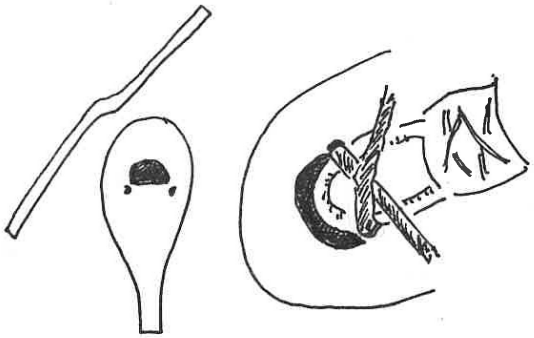
Snow travel conditions in Canadian terrain are typically different. In Manitoba and Ontario, winter trips are generally best conducted using snowshoes. Routes along waterways are commonly selected in order to avoid dense coniferous forests. Unfortunately, travel on ice increases the likelihood slush will be encountered. Rising and falling winter temperatures expand and shrink lake ice thereby creating cracks that allow water to rise and form on top of the ice, often undetectable by layers of snowfall until it is stepped in. Although snowshoeing is a slower means of travel compared to skiing (under ideal conditions) snowshoe are more effective at dealing with

slush or dense bush, making snowshoe travel more efficient and economical in the long-run. The woven rawhide on traditional snowshoes allows slush to fall through the holes when tapped with a stick, thus encountering lake slush becomes an inconvenience, not an impediment to forward progress. In contrast, slush frozen onto a ski bottom is difficult to remove, building up with each step until a skier is forced to stop, remove their skis and scrape off the slush-turned-ice.

The utility of the of snowshoe webbing was driven home to me at the end of a seven-day trip in Algonquin Park. Our group, on snowshoes, was able to travel continuously on our loop, whereas another group that had entered the park on snowmobiles and skis were stuck in the slush only two hundred metres from their starting point. Moving up inclines, maneuvering through bush and executing chores around camp are made far easier wearing snowshoes rather than skis. Various snowshoe designs developed, as makers recognized and adapted snowshoe features to their specific winter bioregions and climatic conditions (e.g. upturned toe snowshoes work well in regions that commonly develop a crust on snow) (MacEachren, 2011).

As I travel in winter using the technology designed for specific northern regions, I have come to appreciate the practical ingenuity of Indigenous people. In North America, I tend to limit my ski trips to old logging roads and groomed trails that offer similar conditions to those I encountered in Norway. Additionally, Canada does not offer the elaborate, well-distributed hut-to-hut system (commonly stocked with food) that reflects the historical distances between Lapp family lodges . This system allows today's skiers to travel with minimal gear in light packs. Lacking these well-thought-out accommodations, winter travelers in Canada using snowshoes must use sleds or toboggans to haul their gear. Hauling gear rather than backpacking it is less physically demanding as it does not require the use of large snowshoes to offset the added weight on the carrier. For the same reason, it reduces the person's risk of breaking through the ice.

I use photographs of my ski and snowshoe trips to illustrate the ways in which travel technology is suited to regional winter conditions. Teachers who have not had the opportunity to take winter trips by skis or snowshoes can find suitable pictures and photographs to explain different regional travel conditions. Regardless of snow conditions, I always share cultural lore pertaining to skiing and snowshoeing that emphasizes cultural traditions that link both travel technologies to the winter landscape. The activities enrich participant awareness and appreciation for snowshoes and skis as technological gifts that we can make because we have paid attention to the land. These activities naturally flow into ski and snowshoe experiences that transcend the emphasis on speedier travel.



Tie a snowshoe harness to a wooden snowshoe with a strap

Activities: (1) Cut various size snowshoe shapes using three quarter inch thick plywood boards. The boards can be used outside on the ground when there is no snow, allowing the students practice in tying on snowshoes. Lashed-on snowshoes, as opposed to leather-buckled bindings, allow a person to rapidly kick off their snowshoes if they fall through the ice. (2) Organize an event in which students wear either wooden snowshoes or their boots and must tap their foot with each step as if they were knocking slush off. (3) Have students trace out the woven pattern used in snowshoe webbing or practice weaving their own webbing on wooden hoops using string or rawhide (Culin, 1992). Students will become familiar with the intricacy of the triangular weave unique to

snowshoe webbing. (4) Show students a copy of George Catlin's painting 'The Snowshoe Dance' and ask them to create their own version of a dance that honours the creation of the snowshoe. (5) Using a stick, mark out a map of Canada on the ground. Create a trivia snowshoe game that involves moving to specific locations on the map (e.g. show a picture of a Labrador snowshoe with fine weave and have students move to this area on the map).

Summary

The activities we use in our no-snow classes are designed to provide teacher candidates with the knowledge and context to decide if skis or snowshoes are the best choice for any given climatic or topographic environment. Additionally, the no-snow classes provide interesting and useful travel lore as well as shared experiences that facilitate a deeper understanding of snowshoeing and skiing as culture-based, northern activities. The overarching objectives of the no-snow classes are; a contextual examination of traditional snowshoe and ski technologies and to instill in students the deeper appreciating of the connection to the land and whole environment as demonstrated by the indigenous peoples who developed the snowshoes and skis we used today.

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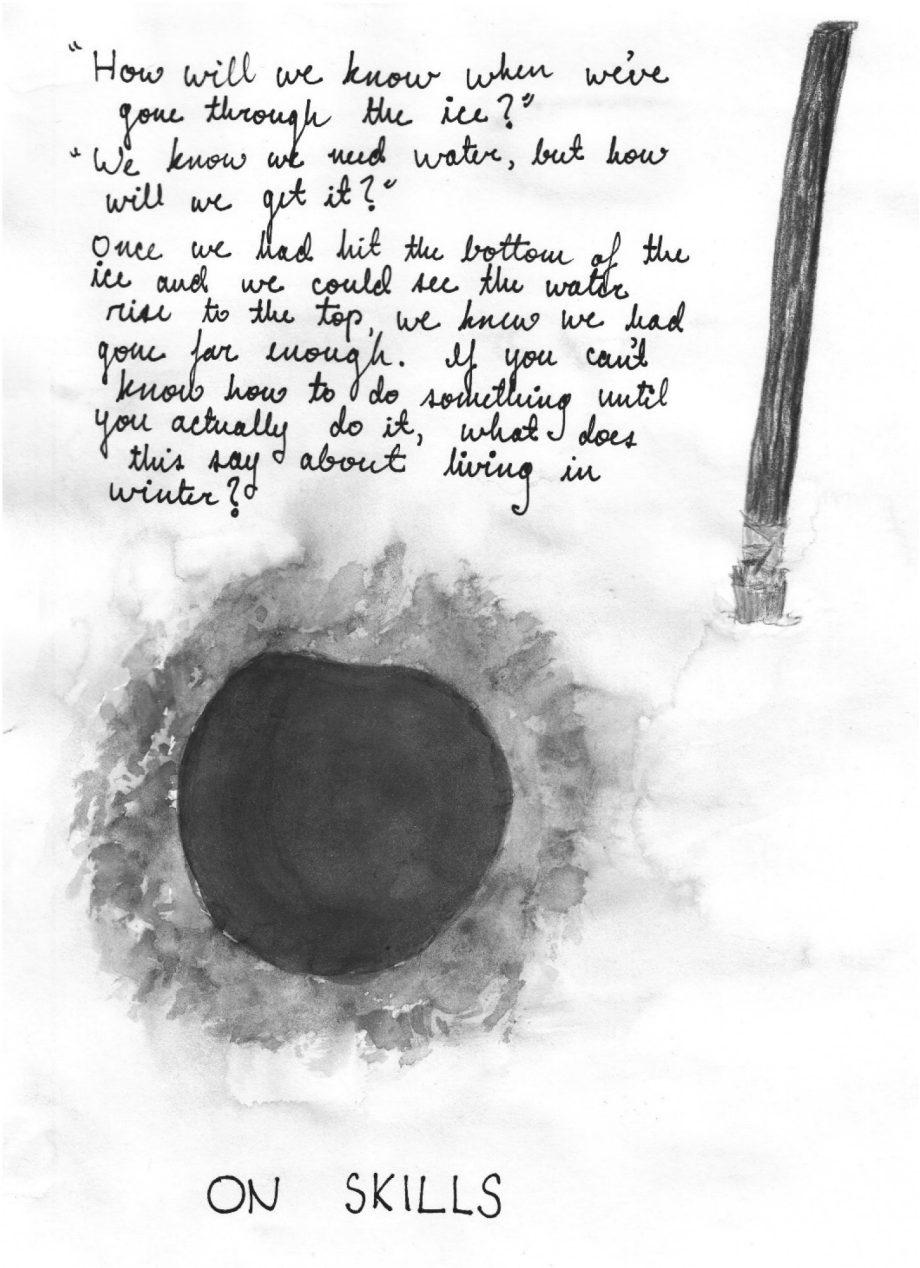
Zabe MacEachren is an avid skier and snowshoer. Her journey to understand the ski and snowshoe development have inspired her to write a children's book on the topic. When not exploring some wintery landscape, she can be found coordinating the Outdoor and Experiential Education program at Queen's University. She can be reached at maceache@queensu.ca

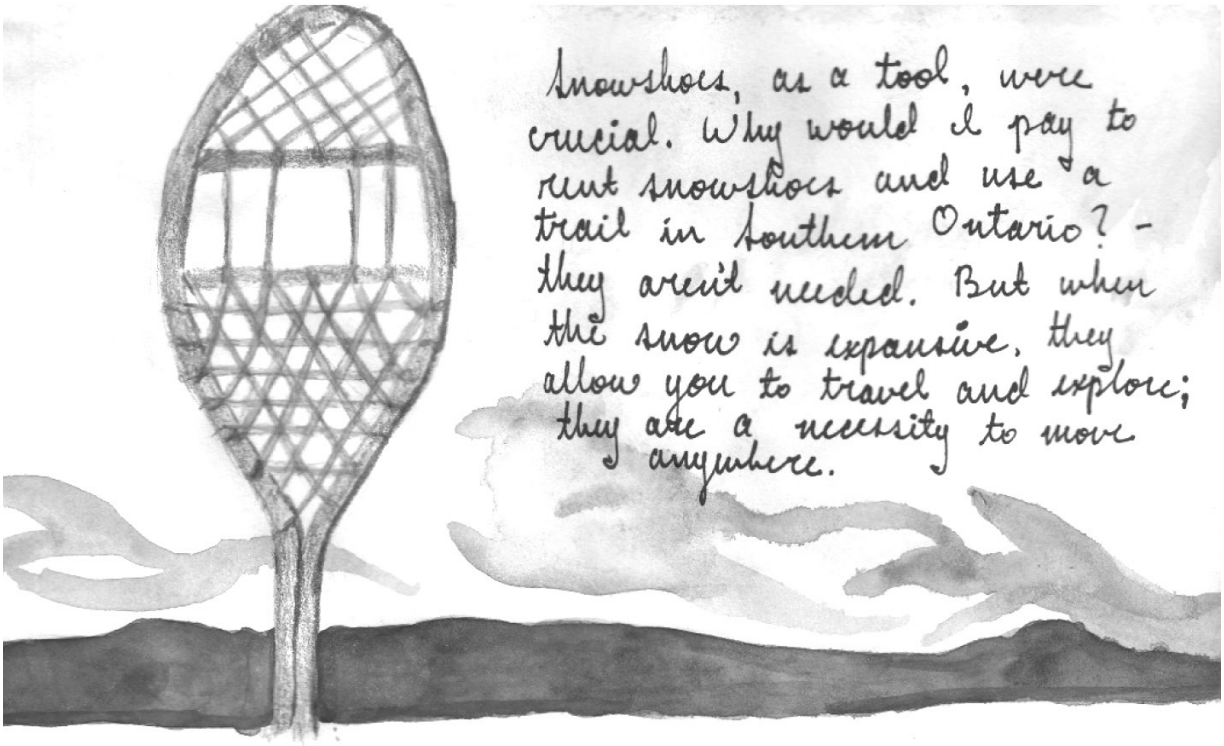
A Celebration of Winter as Place

By Mary Anne Schoenhardt

Celebration of Winter as Place — the part-credit course offered for students in the Arts and Science, Integrated Science, or Life Sciences programs at McMaster University and lead by retired professor Bob Henderson — explored what it means to live and thrive in the winter and how this can relate to Canadian identity. Over the course of the weekend, I was able to experience Algonquin Park in a different way, spending time with others outside, talking, learning, and also taking reflective time by myself. At the end of the course, I submitted these paintings and thoughts as a final reflection.

Mary Anne Schoenhardt is an undergraduate student at McMaster University studying Integrated Science. When not studying, she loves to be running, dancing, and skiing.





Along the same lines, a kicksled just wasn't practical given the amount of snow and lack of ice. While it was fun to use, it wasn't any easier or efficient; but that doesn't mean it's useless. It just means it wasn't the right tool for the job.

ON TOOLS

I didn't realize how little snow we have in Hamilton until you're surrounded by a real amount of snow; it's expansive, covering everthing, and it's white. Everything starts to look slightly dirtier coming home - not just the snow but the air and space.

Fire and smoke permeate everything - even to wash we used fire. I wasn't aware of how strong it smelt until I came home and even my night retainer tasted like smoke.

ON NORMS

Winter as a Place — An Ode to Winter

By Emily Cowley

There is no "a". That's what we learned, I like to think. Not a destination but a being, living, seeing, breathing way of life – identity perhaps. Lost, only to be found – or not. Yet *place* represents so much more than that.

Winter as

home	purpose	thought	hope
isolation	culture	history	desolation
barrier	passion	story	gateway
condition	Taste	tool	memory
sense	language	path	and so
heart	advantage	time	much more…

But it's nothing if not experienced.

Every story told, every imprint made, every piece of wood chopped, it resonates — or not — but it is lived and felt throughout history until today. But is Winter as art losing its "appeal"? Is it disappearing from our lives, swallowed up whole by something else entirely?

Winter

you're creator, challenger, listener, fighter;
shaper and taker and maker and more.
How we've clung to you, fought with you, run from you
and needed you to make us whole.

But we're letting you slip away,
away from our hearts, away into puddles.And there's only so much we can restore.Yet you're worth keeping, worth saving, worth loving, worth more…
oh so much more than we'll ever know.

Your wind swept, white blankets – a reflection we wince at,
and shield our poor eyes from. When really the soul searing,
bone-chattering truth it reflects is meant to be faced, to shock, to disturb
for it is only in the uncomfortable that we find growth.

Instead we've set up synthetic walls to barricade ourselves in,
to "protect" ourselves from the onslaught —
only we've done more harm than good.
We're afraid to be alone, afraid to look back, afraid to leave home.

Silence is deafening — snow-muffled silence especially —
so we avoid it.
We've stopped listening, to nothing.
We've stopped looking, up, down — heck — all around!

We've forgotten how to play, and embrace the joy of falling.
We miss the otter tracks at our feet and the stars overhead.
We don't know how to lie still or stare out the window
because all we know is how to be productive.

Yet, when we:
let the snow in, the cold in, the wild in, and open our eyes;
open our minds to the knowledge of experience, and traditional ways of those before us;
put down our screens and pick up the ice pick,
take off our runners and put on some snow shoes;
step away from the networks and into the empty;
let go of expectations and fall on our faces;
take off our watches and put on our layers…

When we do this we find our souls less hungry, our hearts restored,

our connections more human, our
movements more natural,
our passion reignited and our coffee cup
a shining emblem of
friluftsliv.

You, Winter, are a winner, a transformer,
a restorer.
It is up to us to find our rhythm, to learn
to live with you —
for when we do, it's worth it.
Your beauty doesn't disappoint.

I will never tire of your snow laden
branches, sunny reflections,
blizzard whirlwinds, crisp air or your
spirit.

You're worth experiencing, and you
must be shared. We can't afford not to.

Winter as Experience.

Emily Cowley is currently finishing up her final year of undergraduate studies at McMaster University. Her degree is in Arts and Science with a minor in Public Leadership. This piece was written for a creative reflection assignment following a winter camping trip university course. She has a deep passion for experiential/ outdoor learning, making it no surprise that she plans to take time off after this year to continue her learning through work, travel, and play — while practicing embracing "the joy of falling" of course!

The Educational Power of the Natural Environment Through Experiential Methodology

By Lázaro Mediavilla Saldaña, Virginia Gómez Barrios, Vicente Gómez Encinas

Activities in the Natural Environment

The natural environment is a privileged place to develop teaching and learning processes, offering a context with its own different characteristics (Miguel, 2015), such as a changing environment with a high degree of uncertainty (Granero and Baena, 2007, in Baena, 2006).

Physical Activities in the Natural Environment (PANE) include all motor activities that are developed in and for natural surroundings with an educational intention (Miguel, 2003). They have been shown to contribute to the physical (improving coordination, physical condition, etc.), intellectual (learning concepts, techniques, decision-making, etc.) and emotional (self-improvement, cooperation, effort, etc.) development of the participants (Granero and Baena, 2007).

These types of activities help to develop competences in the field of knowledge and interactions with the real world through perceptions and interactions between the individual and that given environment, thus obtainin g improvements at the motor level. They are also of great importance for the acquisition of healthy lifestyle habits and leisure options (Baena and Granero, 2011). According to the study by Caballero, Hernández and Reina (2018), PANE possess a series of common characteristics:

- They are physical and motor activities: interaction with nature through movement.
- The natural environment is the space in which activities are developed, offering abundant stimuli and changes.
- They have an ecological purpose: through these activities, there is interaction between the individual and the environment that promotes individual appreciation and respect.
- They present a certain degree of challenge and adventure for the participants.
- They present a certain degree of uncertainty from two points of view: the environment (developing in a changing, natural and uncontrolled environment) and the participants (referring to the possible responses of the individual and relationships with peers in different situations).
- Risk: they imply a risk that can be objective, such as a possible accident (although these types of risks are minimal because the activities are well planned and there is the necessary security) or subjective, that is the feeling of risk that the participants experience (managed according to the objective of the activity).
- They produce emotions and sensations: they generate different types of sensations due to total involvement at a physical, cognitive, social and emotional level; to the dynamics of the activities; to the interaction with colleagues and the environment, etc.
- They have a leisure-recreational character: the main objective is personal enjoyment, the sensation of freedom and a feeling of being at ease.
- They generate experiences: different experiences are produced from those of the urban environments to which participants are accustomed, inducing reflection about these learning experiences that participants will be able to assimilate and transfer to other situations.
- Personal and social development: they promote the process of humanisation of the subjects in any of the contexts that develop (formal, non-formal or informal).

Outdoor Education and its Methodologies

Outdoor education involves different educational areas. As Higgins and Kirk (2006) explain, it is based on the interaction among three areas: outdoor activities, respect and protection of the environment, and the personal and social development of the participants. Outdoor learning is aimed at

providing learning experiences that involve participants developing in the three areas mentioned above. During outdoor educational activities, it is necessary to understand that what is important is not the physical activity itself, but everything that surrounds that activity, as exemplified by Higgins and Kirk (2006). If you paddle down a river in a canoe, the teacher and the activity should not only focus on the descent of the river, but also on everything that surrounds the activity, such as the geomorphology of the river, the currents, the area it is in, river pollution, the local history, etc., but place more emphasis on one or the other, taking into account the purpose of the activity, the interests of the educator, the participants and the environment.

Different educational methodologies exist in the field of outdoor education or education in the natural environment to develop activities. The philosophy of all of them is movement, staying in natural spaces and first-hand experiences in these environments (Pedersen, 2010). In outdoor education, students are active participants in their own teaching-learning processes (Štemnerger, 2010).

The experiential methodology, which has been used in this study, is related to the above, based on experiential learning, which consists of education through first-hand experiences of physical activities in the natural environment in order to contribute to the students' integral development (Caballero, 2012). This first-hand real-life experience of the teaching-learning processes makes learning last longer and thus is better fixed. What is experienced and done with the hands is more difficult to forget (Mediavilla, 2015).

Another of the most commonly used methodologies is the so-called pedagogy of adventure, which is a methodology based on the principles of experiential learning, the main characteristic of which is education in nature through activities in the natural environment using direct first-hand experiences. This pedagogy seeks to contribute to the humanisation process of both the participants and the educator (Caballero, 2012).

Dyment and Potter (2015), after carrying out a detailed analysis of the existing literature on "Outdoor Education", explain that there are numerous definitions, but summarise the characteristics of this methodology as follows: it focuses on the role of the natural environment, it includes components of risk and a certain degree of adventure, to achieve the development of participants at the social level and regarding their own personality. Priest (1986) explains that this methodology uses physical activities in the natural environment and education through experience, focussing on three areas: relationships with the natural environment (knowledge of some concepts related to the surrounding environment), development of physical skills (such as canoeing, climbing, camping, use of technical material, etc.) and interpersonal relationships (interpersonal growth, development of relationships with other participants and with themselves) (Priest, 1986).

The Educational Power of Physical Activities in the Natural Environment

PANE have great educational power by taking into account, on the one hand, the environment in which they develop and, on the other hand, the physical activity that is carried out there. According to Caballero (2012), after his analysis of the different approaches of different authors, the main characteristics that give educational potential to PANE are the following:

- They take place in the natural environment: characterised by being an extensive little-known and changing environment offering an abundance of stimuli.
- They enable interaction with nature in order to respect and value it.
- Uncertainty: inherent to the practice of any PANE, characterised by the sensation of challenge and adventure that produces a large dose of motivation.
- Risk: there are two types, objective and subjective. The objective risk refers to the possibility of having an accident and the subjective risk to the perceived sense of risk.

- The slippery nature of the activities: on the different surfaces of the natural environment.
- Social interaction: physical activity as a vehicle for social and environmental relations.
- Their experiential character: first-hand experiences accompanied by reflection to achieve the participants' personal and social development.
- The high emotional implication: they produce very intense sensations and emotions, derived from total involvement (cognitive, physical, social and emotional) and from the active participation.
- Their social character: they are perfect for achieving a social interaction, making real conflicts appear that can be used as a dynamiting element, enriching the experience and offering an opportunity for personal development.

Parra, Domínguez and Caballero (2008), in turn, explain that what gives the educational character of practical activities in the natural environment are the conditions in which they are developed, making participants use their abilities and resulting in their building their own personality.

Higgins (1996) states that the educational power of experiences in the natural environment contributes to the development of four aspects of the person: physical, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual. It is necessary to take into account that going out into the natural environment does not educate by itself, but rather it is necessary for the teaching staff to carry out pedagogical work, and program and design the activities to achieve the educational effect (Caballero, 2012 and Miguel, 2015).

Methodology

The study was carried out on the improvement of learning. The main objective of was to investigate what benefits educational practices in the natural environment, in which experiential methodology is used, offer for teaching-learning processes. This was done by analysing improvement of the learning of the theoretical contents through these practices and comparing the differences in the results with those results obtained after the theoretical sessions in the classroom.

The subject of "Physical Activities in the Natural Environment" which is given to second year students of the Faculty of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences at the INEF in Madrid was used for this purpose, and divided into two parts:

- First part: corresponding to the theoretical sessions given in the classroom, lasting three and a half months, beginning in February and ending in mid-May.
- Second part: corresponding to the practical educational experience developed in the natural environment using experiential methodology. This second part took place in the Natural Park of Alto Tajo and lasted three and a half days. It occurred at the end of the classroom sessions.

Before starting with the design of the study, a bibliographic review was carried out to analyse the published scientific literature on this specific field of outdoor education in order to support the research, as explained by Guiaro (2015). The first task that was performed, following Guiaro (2015), was to identify the most relevant aspects on the subject to be dealt with, then to look for information using different search engines and databases, i.e. Dialnet, DOAJ, Ingenio, EBSCO, Outdoorpeactivities database, etc. Once the search for information had been carried out, the material found was analysed in order, as explained by Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2004), to selectively extract the relevant information concerning the research subject.

Participants

The participants in the study were the 176 students who were enrolled in the subject in the 2017-18 academic year although only the students who correctly filled out the four questionnaires that constituted the instruments for collecting research data were taken into account, representing a total of 59.

Instruments for Data Collection

As mentioned, the data collection instruments used were four questionnaires, two of them on the contents of the classroom sessions and the other two on the contents of the practical experience in the natural environment. The questionnaires on the classroom sessions included two questions on each of the contents dealt with in these sessions and the practical experience questionnaires included two questions on each of the contents dealt with during the experience. The contents included were the following:

- Classroom contents: orienteering in the natural environment with map and compass, recreational constructions with ropes, necessary equipment for activities in nature and camping.
- Contents in the practical experience: GPS guidance, climbing and abseiling, survival and first aid in the natural environment and knowledge of the environment.

Procedure

The procedure for giving the questionnaires to the students was as follows: the most suitable moments for answering them were specified and the participants were explained what their participation in the study would consist of. The questionnaires on the contents of the classroom sessions (pre-theory questionnaire) were handed out on several different occasions: at the beginning of the course in the first class on the subject, before starting the sessions and once they were finished, and the second questionnaire at the end of the last class on the subject (post-theory questionnaire). As for the questionnaires on the contents of the practical experience, the first was given out on the day of departure just before taking the bus to the Alto Tajo Natural Park (pre-practical questionnaire) and the second at the end of the last activity in the experience, just before starting the return trip to the INEF in Madrid (post-practical questionnaire).
It was decided to carry out all the questionnaires using Google forms. All the questions included were multiple-choice and marked as "mandatory question" so as not to leave any unanswered when sending the completed questionnaire. In addition, two open-ended questions were included in which the name and surname were requested, so that the results of each participant's four questionnaires could be compared later on.

Data Analysis

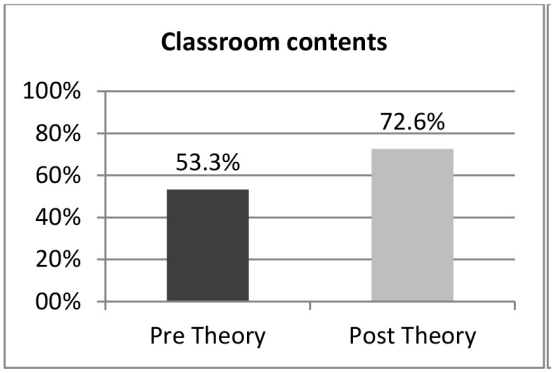
The analysis of the data obtained was carried out using Microsoft Excel (2010) in the following way: first, all the results were collected in a spreadsheet, then all those participants who had not completed the four questionnaires were eliminated and the data weas analysed taking into account only those participants who had completed the four questionnaires correctly. Once the results had been organised and reviewed, the following three analyses were carried out:

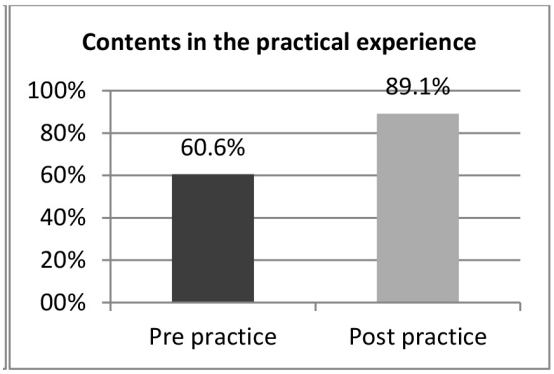
- Analysis of the results of the classroom session questionnaires, in which a comparison was made between the results of the pre-test and the post-test, with the objective of checking whether, through the theoretical sessions, the learning of the participants had increased with respect to their initial knowledge of each specific lesson and in an overall way.
- Analysis of the results of the questionnaires on the practical experience in the natural environment, in which the results obtained in the pre-test and the post-test of the questionnaires were compared, in order to check whether, through practical experience in the natural environment, the learning of the participants had increased with respect to their initial knowledge about each specific lesson and in an overall way.
- Analysis of the results of both types of questionnaire, comparing the differences obtained in the classroom questionnaires and in the questionnaires on the practical experience in the natural environment, with the aim of checking in which case the improvement in learning was greater.

Results

The following graphs show the percentages of correct answers referring to the contents of the subject. The first graph includes the results of

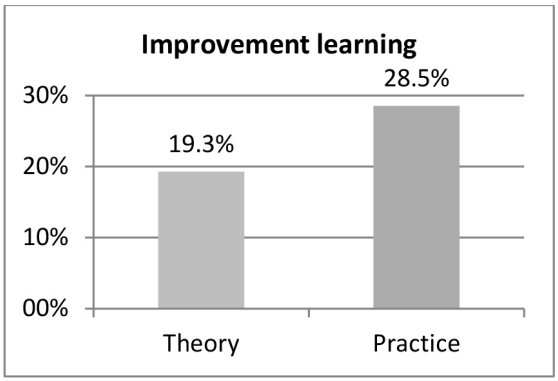
the questionnaires on classroom contents and the second graph includes the results on the contents dealt with in the practical experience.





Graph 1: Correct answers before and after classroom sessions and before and after the practical experience.

With reference to the results of classroom contents, there was an improvement in learning of 19.3%, compared with an improvement of 28.5% in the contents of the practical experience.

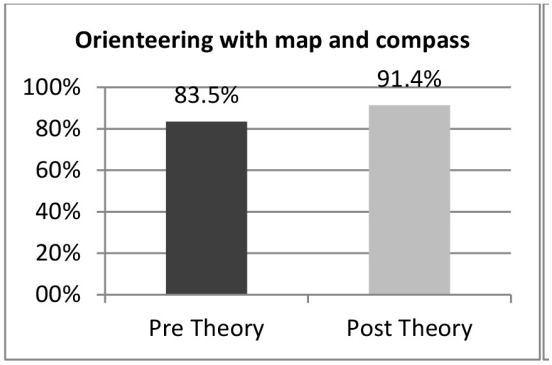


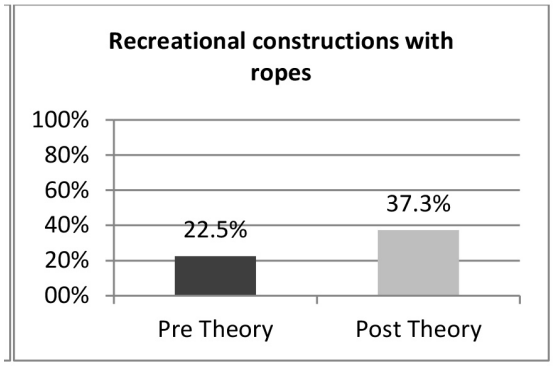
Graph 2: Improvement in learning after classroom sessions and after the practical experience.

Below are a series of graphs in which the improvement in learning can be seen by comparing the percentage of correct answers before and after the classroom sessions and the practical experience in each of the analysed contents.

Contents of the classroom sessions:

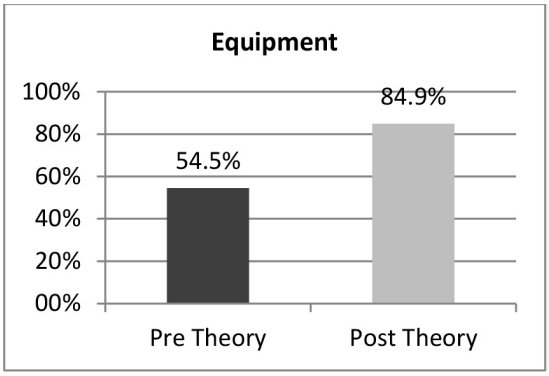
As for the contents of the map and compass, an improvement of 7.9% in learning was evident, and taking into account the results obtained in the questions about recreational constructions with ropes, the improvement in learning was 14.8%.

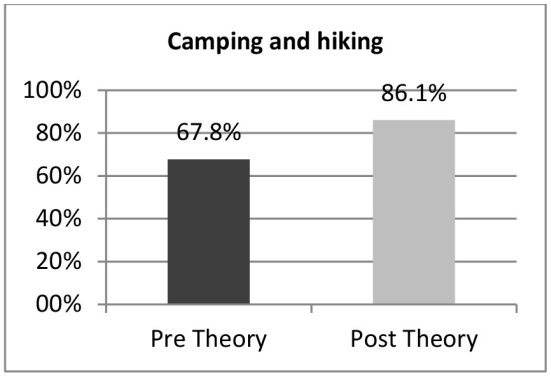




Graph 3: Correct answers before and after the classroom sessions on orienteering with map and compass and on recreational constructions with ropes.

Focusing on the percentages obtained in the questions about basic equipment in activities in the natural environment, there was an improvement in learning of 30.4%. Furthermore, in the camping questions that refer to safe movement in the natural environment and to the different forms of overnight stay, an improvement of 18.3% in terms of the percentage of correct answers was obtained.

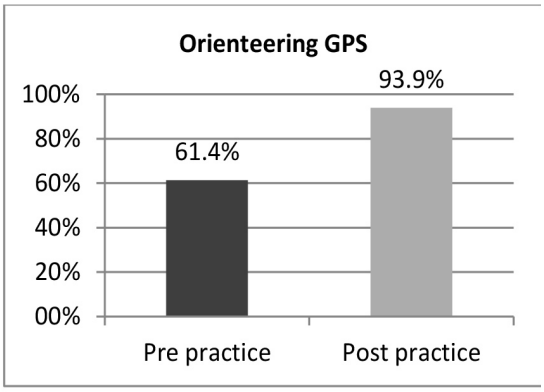


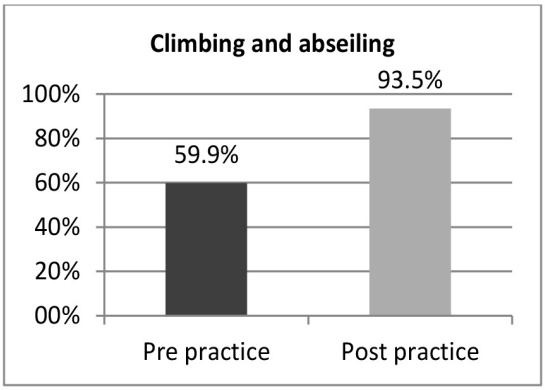


Graph 4: Correct answers before and after classroom sessions on equipment and camping and hiking.

Contents of the sessions on the practical experience:

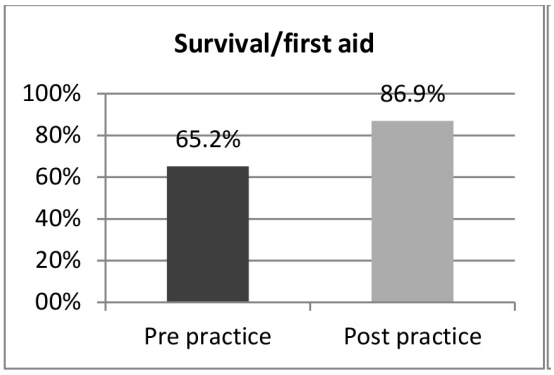
The learning of the contents on orienteering with GPS worked on during the entire practical experience obtained an improvement of 32.6% with respect to knowledge on that subject before departure. In relation to the learning on climbing and abseiling, the improvement in knowledge reached a total of 33.6%.

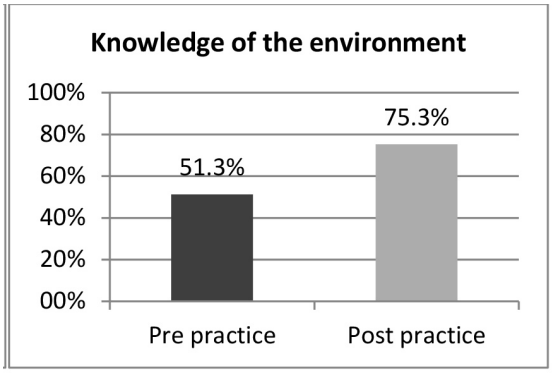




Graph 5: Correct answers before and after the practical experience of GPS orienteering and climbing and abseiling.

Finally, the following graphs show the learning obtained before and after the practical experience in the natural environment in survival and first aid and in knowledge of the environment. With regard to the contents of survival and first aid, an improvement of 21.8% in learning was obtained. In terms of learning about environmental knowledge, an improvement of 24% was observed.





Graph 6: Correct answers before and after

the practical experience on survival/first aid and knowledge of the environment.

Discussion

With regard to the results obtained on the acquisition of learning, improvements were observed in knowledge of the contents of the subject after the theoretical sessions, going from 53.3% at the beginning of the academic year to 72.6% after the last theoretical session. But this improvement was greater after the practical experience in the natural environment, going from 60.6% before the experience to 89.1% after it.

These results agree with what has been stated by different authors such as Arroyo (2010), which indicate that activities in nature have great educational power. In addition, Miguel (2001) states that the natural environment is an ideal place to develop teaching-learning processes, as it helps improve cognition and also the ability to learn to learn (Goleman, 2012).

The results obtained indicate that, with the experiential methodology used in practical experiences in the natural environment, the time dedicated to the teaching-learning processes is less than that spent during the classroom sessions. And, as has been mentioned, the improvement in learning is greater in the three and a half days of practice.

According to the methodology used and without leaving aside the natural environment, statements such as those of Baena (2011), which support the results obtained in the study, explain that there are adventure programs with the main objective of cognitive improvement that are designed in relation to academic goals, as in the case of the practical experience that was used for the study.

Taking into account the data collected in all the questionnaires, it is worth mentioning Mediavilla (2015), who talks about the different elements that must be considered for a teaching-learning process to be meaningful — i.e. the content, the duration, the environment (different from the one that the student is used to, in this case the Alto Tajo Natural Park), the participants and the intensity of the experience (marked by the involvement of the participants in the proposed activities, the demand at a physical level, etc., including all the circumstances surrounding the action). All these elements were present in the practical experience of the study.

Conclusions

- Practical training experiences in the natural environment have great educational power contributing to participants acquiring greater learning compared to that obtained in classroom sessions.
- The natural environment is an area with characteristics that make it different and ideal to develop the teaching-learning processes, referring to nature as a classroom.
- The experiential methodology used in the practical training experiences in the natural environment significantly reduces the time spent in the teaching-learning process, reflected in the difference between the 19.3% improvement in the three and a half months of classroom classes compared with the 28.5% improvement in the three and a half days of classes in the practical experience of the natural environment.

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Hjemstedslaere – At the Edge of the World

By Chris Peters

"*I found the world bigger than I had known it. In human kindness and the true length of a mile. Sunlight and moonlight I recall, the desert and the sea. But the sea most of all.*"
—Christian Beamish, *The Voyage of the Cormorant* (2009)

We paddled out, following the contours of Witless Bay's shoreline. It was, as they say, a rare day. Barely a breath of wind and the sun beating down to split rocks. As far as the horizon the sea dappled in a lazy gold lop. My friend Jeremy and I spoke when we had to, but were mostly just glad to be out on the water. Our thoughts and conversation strayed inward.

The rolling hills and fjords that cut into the granite cliff faces that characterize much of the Avalon's Southern Shore can just be discerned from Witless Bay's harbour mouth. The ocean here laps against shoals which harbour rich veins of marine life, which in turn attract birds. There are four islands just offshore of Witless Bay which constitute an ecological reserve. In season they are home to the largest colony in North America of Atlantic puffins, as well as storm-petrels, kittiwakes and murres. They stain the cliffs and even the trees white with guano.

Jeremy and I knew all this, but we didn't imagine we'd see more than a puffin, or three if we were lucky. Paddling past the headland and along the wind-swept boreal shoreline we found ourselves suddenly in a world not ours. Murres and kittiwakes, but puffins most of all surrounded us. There was a cacophony of noises, of chirrups and cries, of beaks snapping. A smell too, not wholly unpleasant but tangibly present. We watched, bemused, as puffins, their mouths full of silver fish, walked along the water with their wings, a sort of exaggerated breast stroke. We held onto our paddles and tried to take it all in, floating amidst their world. We managed to float into this flotilla of birds, surrounded by birds and their cries, and murres and puffins flew by us so close we had to duck out of their way. Its hard to place a number on the birds, but it was in the thousands, possibly tens of thousands.

All gorging on capelin.

I couldn't say how long we were there. Twenty minutes. Half an hour. A lifetime.

But the spell couldn't last.

The drone of Sea-Doos is hard to ignore, and we noticed two, then three and finally four of the vessels making their angry snarl well to the south-east of us, but circling towards the harbour mouth of Witless Bay. The riders held a conference, lined themselves up — it was clear now there was going to be a race — and then opened up their throttles towards the community wharf through the teeming mass of birds.

The birds and the minke whales which had been feeding on the periphery of this feast were suddenly gone. The skies crowded for a moment, then emptied into a pale blue. A shrinking cloud making for the islands. I watched the Sea-Doos, their riders wholly indifferent to anything beyond the race, in disbelief. My hands raised in mute questioning at the arcs of water rising behind the four Sea-Doos like exhaust plumes. There engines roared and then faded to a drone, a buzz.

Quiet.

Jeremy and I sat there for a moment, our kayaks rolling in the small wake. We tried to speak to what we had been privy to, that world we had touched. But the rude intrusion muted us. So we paddled back towards the wharf.

The world, as Christian Beamish — writer, surfer and sailor — discovered is bigger than I had known it. There are worlds we can only ever touch the periphery of, beyond our ken.

As I paddled back it seemed that we humans can be bigger in ignorance and stupidity than I would have imagined.

Hjemstedslaere: The Need for Natural History

"*(Markland students) were also introduced to a subject known in Norway as 'Hjemstedslaere' (homestead knowledge) consisting of* ***natural history****, geography and civics.*"

—Gordon Handock, *Twentieth-Century Newfoundland: Explorations* (1994)

What, exactly is natural history?

At one time it was an umbrella phrase that captured in its snare the natural sciences entire — including botany, geology, and paleontology. Today, we would be more familiar with natural history as the study of ecology, wildlife biology (of course subsetted into flora, fauna, land and sea), even meteorology (MacKinnon, 2013).

A keen study of natural history should enable students to become literate in the particulars of a place. What are the animals and plants, insects and even fungi that populate their surroundings? Armed with this information the learning conversation would be all the richer, at once more nuanced and rooted, localized.

This is what I think Anna Sethne, the Norwegian educator and philosopher had in mind when she proposed Home Environment Learning in her 1928 book Hjemstedslaere. Through her course of immersive study in the particulars of a locality she sought to recognize and respect each child's individuality while simultaneously building an education community founded on co-operation, and to increase the spiritual power in children (Aagre, 2016). Not so very long ago, our lived worlds informed our spiritual as well as material lives. The coming and going of the seasons, of animals and birds constructed our worldview, our culture (Jenkinson 2018). Hjemstedslaere was to be a holistic model for learning and teaching, informed more by the first frost of autumn and the seasons first wildflowers (attracting in turn bees and hornets and hoverflies), than by rote memorization, equations or novel study alone.

Sethne sought to bridge nature — how it informed local customs and vocations — into the classroom. Hjemstedslaere was an outdoor field of study immersed in the totality of the community — from the trees to the fish to the sharpening of the scythes for late August haying. By letting younger students wander and explore, always returning together to unpack their discoveries as a class community, students were better able to see both the particulars and the totality of their surroundings. Here was their course syllabus and curriculum outcomes, just beyond the classroom door (Aagre, 2016). This immersion in the natural world helped foster an "emotional foundation for the more abstract ecological concept that everything is connected to everything else" (Sobel, 1996).

The fabled seven seasons (depending on the year) of a typical Newfoundland outport followed the demands of work that made such communities possible — the seasonal cod fishery, the seal hunt, gathering of berries, baking of bread, the laying in of potato beds comprised of animal manures, seaweed and capelin to create soil, the daily trudge for water, the autumnal cutting of firewood, winter caribou hunts and fur trapping, and on and on and on (House, 2017). Yet, of the 120 families who took up residence in Markland half came from Town (St. John's) and a full quarter were out of work miners from Victoria (Colton, 2014). These were families removed from the self-sufficiency of communal outport life, having traded it in for wage labour. When the Great Depression hit, theirs were the jobs that evaporated. Of course, outport families did avail of the opportunity to go to Markland. It represented the possibility of betterment. Certainly, that is what Frederick Emerson, Markland trustee hoped for.

Emerson saw Hjemstedslaere as, "'Practical Local Knowledge'… (included) the

awakening of an interest in Nature and the life around it… It embraces the cultivation of a small school garden, care of a school dairy, the collection of wild flowers and the explaining of the work adults are doing on the farm (around them)" (Colton, 2014).

Natural history here was part of a comprehensive plan where local ecology, agriculture, geography and vocations merged and coalesced into the culture of Markland itself. Emerson's vision far exceeded this one locality. He proposed that it become the template for the colony entire (Colton, 2014). As outdoor educators looking back, this is heady stuff. Outdoor, experiential education was suggested not as a peripheral box to tick but as the very backbone of learning and teaching. Furthermore, the natural world — that plants and insects, animals and bacteria particular to each ecoregion — was seen as the nexus for a culture wholly different from anywhere else. Education, in this context was not limited to the school. It bled out into the community and infused every facet of daily life.

Shifting Baseline Syndrome

"That was fifty years ago, he says, as a warning, wanting me to understand that what's forgotten is lost and most of this he cannot even recall forgetting"

—Michael Crummey, *What's Lost* (1998)

The story of European colonists in Newfoundland leaves in its wake a frayed and fractured ecosystem. The right whale was hunted to localized extinction along the Northern Peninsula and Labrador coast by Basque fishers and hunters in the 16th century (O'Leary, 1997). The Great Auk, a flightless bird prized for its downy feathers, oil and as a fresh food source for fishing crews coming to Newfoundland for the summer has been extinct since 1844 (MacKinnon, 2013). The Newfoundland wolf (canis lupus beothecus), a genetically unique species was hunted to extinction, too — though for decidedly less economical reasons. The seal hunt so decimated seal population that, even as Water Street merchants outfitted the first icebreakers in the world to prosecute the hunt they had to press further and further into the icefields to find the swiles (Brown, 1978).

And, of course the cod fishery. In 1991, scientists discovered what they had long felt was reality — the great Atlantic cod migration that settled on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland where they mated and spawned. However, the discovery came too late. The advance of super-trawlers — capable of catching, processing and freezing catches onboard — as well as the use of sonar and trawl nets meant the cod fish were swimming into borrowed time. In 1968, 810,000 tonnes of codfish were netted, more than three times higher than any other catch before super-trawlers. Fish biologists and politicians used this number as the baseline that for all future catches, well into the 1980s. Even as evidence accumulated the cod fishery was disappearing (Higgins, 2009). In 1992, federal Fisheries Minister John Crosbie shut down the commercial cod fishery for two years. A moratorium to let the stocks rebound.

The moratorium is still in effect today (MacKinnon, 2013).

The caribou, pine marten, Atlantic salmon, capelin — all are under threat, are operating within a fraction of their historical habitat. Even the return to Newfoundland of coywolves — the result of coyotes interbredding with Labrador wolves — has been met with trepidation and the call for more hunts, more culls (MacEachern, 2017). So it seems we haven't learned anything about interfering with our surroundings. We are living through what Thomas Berry referred to as a schism, when the old story of our connections to nature has been severed but we don't yet have a new story to replace it (2003).

We are searching for a means to approach and connect with the diminishing natural world. To find resonance in and with it.

Again.

The need for this connection is at the core a story of our very own survival. Not just in Newfoundland or Canada, but globally. Doug Peacock, long-time conservationist and author of *Grizzly Years* notes in that wildlife is disappearing at a rate 10,000 times faster than can be replaced by evolution. The timescale of the former countered against the emerging juggernaut of climate change means nature as we have known it and understood it is being rendered almost meaningless before our very eyes (Carrier, 2019).

On a recent bike ride down the Southern Shore, I touched again that world beyond ours. From St. John's to Trepassey the roads are rutted and pot-holed, often disintegrating into gravel. But mostly empty of cars. A half days effort brought us to St. Vincent's Beach at the south-east bottom of the Avalon Peninsula. The grey sands rose and fell from the stark windswept cliffs before hitting the grey-blue seas. It was, to my eyes like being at the very edge of the world. I stepped off my bike and towards the beach, my thoughts already on lunch. Feeling the hours of effort, it took me a moment to digest what I was seeing. Not twenty feet offshore, a humpback whale fluke emerged! I turned to tell my wife, but she was pointing to a flurry of spouts that emerged almost simultaneously further down the beach.

The capelin were running ashore, following their drive to mate and lay eggs. This

teeming mass of fish had attracted in turn twenty or so humpbacks. We watched them from the beach, and later atop a clifftop perch where we could look down upon them rolling and gorging. People stood open-mouthed, awed. Smiles playing at the corners of their mouths. Pictures were taken, heads shook. Gannets fell from the sky like avian missiles and gulls in all their splendour circled the feast, crying. We, strangers to each other, found the world larger than we could have imagined and celebrated it together.

This is the promise for Hjemstedslaere in the 21st century. To see beyond ourselves and appreciate the importance and place of the insects, animals, plants and that comprise and make our home.

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Knowledge Lost: The Anorak and Chopper Mitts

By Bob Henderson

I know many Outdoor Educators who are drawn to traditional clothing and equipment. I know fewer folks in the general public who are drawn to or are aware of the traditions of outdoor living in Canada. The takeaway message from this Backpocket Column will be wear and use what works. The problem with this is that as time passes, the public — and perhaps Outdoor Educators — lose the outdoor living traditions to fashion, cheaper products and/or lack of awareness. The products I write about here are generally not sold in conventional outdoor stores. This is a problem. Here are two winter clothing traditions that I suggest are worth keeping, and as Outdoor Educators, worth sharing. What follows are two winter experiments to conduct with students.

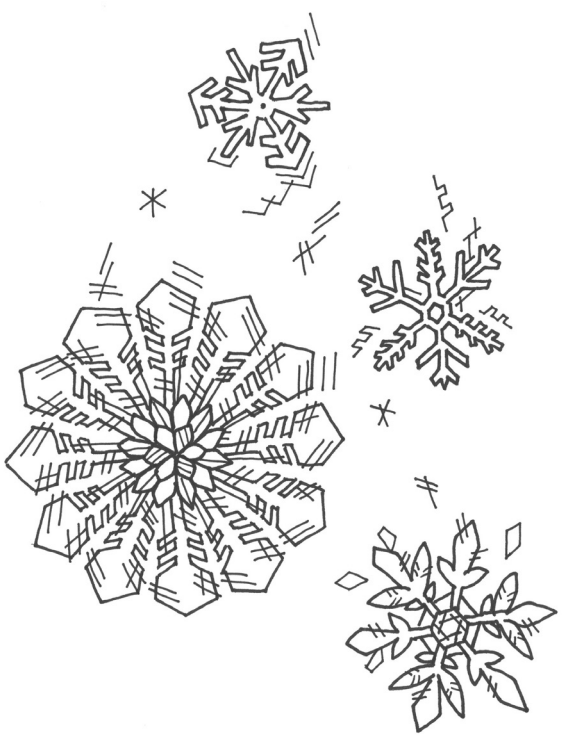
The Anorak

When I lived in Edmonton with repetitive negative 30C days with big sunshine, I conducted a modest experiment. One day I wore a high-end Gore-tex jacket out for a two-hour cross-country trail ski. The next day I repeated the trail ski as exactly as before as best I could, but with a winter cotton Anorak. The results: well, I think they are worthy of a write-up.

At the end of the ski, in the Gore-tex jacket, I was damp. A surprising frosted layer of moisture was trapped between my insulation layer and the jacket. At the end of the ski in the cotton Anorak, I was not feeling damp. There was no moisture trapped inside. I was startled by the difference. So why aren't we wearing Anoraks cut spaciously (important) with a big front pocket and spacious hood? They really work great, better than the Gore-tex for most winter conditions and are cheaper. One answer is the Anorak is hard to find and is out-of-fashion, but a significant reason is also that its merits are not understood. Similarly, a hiking boot perhaps worn for hours of winter walking is no comparison to a wool/felt liner, canvas/hide outer moccasin. Too obvious!

The Chopper Mitt

Another more subtle example of "knowledge lost" is the classic chopper mitt. Like the moccasin, an inner liner wool mitt (or boiled wool, even better and on topic with traditional gear) is worn with a leather outer. I suggest this is far superior to the more conventional store product.



In an outdoor store, you are most likely to see one-layer insulated gloves or mitts or a two-layer system with a nylon outer layer. There are two problems with these: the single insulated layer is hard to dry when wet compared to a two-layer system given that the layers can be dried separately. On a related note, when you start sweating you have an option to go down one layer to cool off. Secondly, the nylon or Gore-tex outer is too loose in one's hand compared to leather in the snow. Hence, chopper mitts: not slippery in the hand/in the snow when chopping wood/handling wood or working dog harnesses or using ski poles. Minor stuff this? I think not. Try an experiment: have a

student try moccasins and chopper mitts for half the day then switch to what they likely brought from an outdoor store. Mimic the time on task. Have them do winter work, moving wood, hauling water, shoveling snow.

But, don't take my word for it. Look up old images (and new) when folks more readily worked in winter. You will see loose fitting jackets, including many Anorak, with moccasins and chopper mitts.

In Outdoor Education we cannot rely on outdoor stores to help us with the best clothing and gear. Often, they are not selling it. There's not enough interest. Knowledge is lost. In winter, this is particularly noticeable. There is not enough understanding of winter. In Outdoor Education, however, we can be the source for knowledge gain and even start new fashion trend!

For information concerning how to make or purchase personal winter gear, see *A SnowWalkers Companion*, Garrett and Alexandra Conover, Ragged Mountain Press, Camden, Maine, 1995. Also, visit the Lure of the North website: https://lureofthenorth.com/. Canadian Outdoor Equipment, a store located in Mississauga (Port Credit), Ontario is an exception to much of what I say in the first paragraph.

Bob is aware that this article could come off like a grumpy senior moment but urges you to try these experiments and see for yourself. Bob works in a variety of outdoor settings and pursuits, including being the Resource Editor for Pathways.

Benefits of Natural Play on Childhood Development

By Donna Wong and David Chorney

Introduction

Throughout human history people have relied upon the natural world for basic survival. This long lasting and important relationship to nature has been rapidly changing. Many peoples' lives are now dominated by the built environment – places where we live, work and spend our free time, and with each new technological advancement, people become further separated from the natural landscape.

The experiences of childhood have also been impacted. The free time once afforded to children to play, explore and roam through nearby hills, woods, and fields, enjoying nature's abundance of opportunities, has declined (Derbyshire, 2007). The lack of outdoor exposure can impact children's behaviour in society, and it may continue well into their adulthood. This idea is known as Nature Deficit Disorder (Laird, McFarland-Piazza, & Allen, 2014). Many researchers across the globe urge for the re-integration of aspects of nature into children's playtime in order to avoid any feelings of alienation later in life. Natural play is a new method to attract children into an unstructured outdoor environment. Unlike with a structured playground, this new idea provides opportunities for children to engage with and experience various natural elements.

Natural play provides a multitude of benefits including: empowering children to develop creativity and critical thinking skills, improving health and wellbeing, building an appreciation for nature, as well as experiencing risky play (Sandseter, 2009). It sets the stage for the new generation to be healthy and active while developing a recognition of human dependency on a healthy ecosystem (Moore, 2014).

Development of Creativity and Critical Thinking Skills

An immersive experience in nature can be a powerful tool in the education and development of children. Children's imaginations and creativities can be sparked by the many senses of wonder and countless possibilities in nature. As Moore (2014) describes, natural spaces are: "Dynamic, changing, complex, places to explore, disorderly, free-range…" The constant changes in the environment prepares children to adapt to what is given to them and therefore, fosters their critical thinking skills. Most tools and natural materials are mobile and not static which makes nature, "A place where children use their senses to explore the planet and experience the wonders of nature." (Keeler, 2013). The freedom to use their senses develops a reflex for children to use their imagination in real life tasks. Many tasks in life mimic nature in the way that they constantly change based on the environment. As tasks continue to change, children's critical thinking skills are trained and polished as they experiment with objects with a, "see what happens" mentality (Moore, 2014). Therefore, allowing children to play in a natural environment is vital for the development of core skills such as: observation, problem-solving and reasoning skills, categorization, creativity, and risk-identification (Council, 2014).

Natural play fosters children's problem solving and reasoning skills by providing an environment that enables them to think for themselves. Children learn to brainstorm ways to apply their ideas into real-life situations, building on their creative problem-solving skills. There are many social situations in the natural play spaces that require children to use their problem-solving skills to communicate and collaborate with each other, sharing their imaginations and creating what they envision. Once they figure out as a team

how the task may be completed, they develop a strong sense of confidence and competency. As this sense of competency continues to grow stronger and they feel supported by their peers, children become more willing to dig deeper and explore further into the unknown.

Effects on Health and Wellbeing

In modern society, the lack of free play has resulted from children's unwillingness to choose outdoor play settings (Mainella, Agate, & Clark, 2011). Not only has this reduced cognitive and interpersonal proficiency, but it has also affected the physical conditions. According to various research by Keeler, Laird, and Moore, the population of children struggling with long-term health issues is increasing drastically. Statistics have shown an obesity epidemic where 1 in 4 Canadians are obese, and rates are continuing to rise (Moore, 2014). In addition to obesity, other serious long-term health problems such as vitamin D deficiency and blood hypertension are also seen more frequently in children than ever before.

These health complications are due to unhealthy lifestyle choices such as poor diet and a lack of physical activity. Studies suggest that the lack of physical activity can be attributed to increased time spent in front of digital screens, which in turn leads to another consequence of people developing myopia at an earlier age (Borghese et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the use of medication for disorders such as ADHD and depression has become more common (Moore, 2014; Council, 2014). The rapid appearance of these disorders can be directly and indirectly attributed to the lack of play in natural settings. Another consequence of the lack of play in natural settings by children is a term coined by Richard Louv known as, "nature deficit disorder." This term is intended to describe play deprivation in natural settings. Nature deficit disorder can be described as a disconnection with the environment from the current generation's tendency to "focus on built and engineered entertainment rather than the natural world." (Mainella, Agate, & Clark, 2011).

Missing outdoor play time is impacting children's health as they are not strengthening their minds, bodies and senses. In fact, today's children have shorter and lower quality lives than their parents due to the dissociation from nature. As a result of the disconnection from the outdoors, it is decreasing children's ability to be, "Happy, healthy and prosperous adults." (Council, 2014). It is becoming clear through research on the brain, that children need play (ParticipACTION, 2018). Natural play and contact with the environment will not only develop core skills but may also improve children's health and foster self-confidence and self-esteem (Aasen, Torunn Grindheim & Waters, 2009, Dowdell, Gray & Malone, 2011). According to Keeler, being in nature decreases the symptoms of ADHD and increases the ability to concentrate. This may be due to the dynamic environment and consistent physical exertion.

Other research has claimed that contact with nature has been found to lower blood pressure, strengthen the immune system, and reduce stress levels (Council 2014). Simply being exposed to and playing outdoors can reduce many of the chronic diseases and health epidemic that many children are facing today. A physically and emotionally healthy child will reflect positivity on themselves as well as others around them.

Appreciation for Nature

Nature can offer much more than just benefits for the human body and mind as children grow. It educates children about the importance of appreciating and protecting the natural resources that we have on earth. The interactive and hands-on learning experience of natural play targets the goal of helping children understand how being in the outdoors can positively affect the body, mind and social interactions.

Natural play spaces are living systems that allow children to have a first-hand experience in a small portion of what nature has to offer. For example, the power and ability of life in nature to regenerate and recover from any damages caused by weather, animals or humans is unlike anything else. These amazing natural occurrences can intrigue many children creating a stronger engagement between them and nature (Council, 2014). When children experience joy in the natural environment, they will start to associate some of those natural elements with feelings of positivity and excitement. These feelings will lead to more interdependence and sensitivity, which can then develop a sense of care and an effort to sustain the place and elements that makes them happy (Laird, McFarland-Piazza, & Allen, 2014).

According to Moore (2014), "Childhood engagement with nature is more likely to produce conservation-minded citizens willing to care for the planet, to protect our natural resources…" An unstructured engagement with the environment at a young age has a lasting effect on the individual's values and attitudes as an adult. The cherished memories with nature will help drive them to preserve what created those positive experiences. For this reason, many researchers support the idea in the belief that natural play has numerous benefits to human development.

Experiences of Risky Play

Harris (2016) echoes the belief that natural play has more benefits to offer human development stating that, "Young children should be given opportunities to dig in the earth, make mud pies, build castles… and take new risks…" Children who are given the space and opportunity to play in these environments with natural elements can experience first-hand, risk-taking opportunities and risky play.

However, the lack of understanding about natural play or outdoor play has been causing a negative perception of risky play in many parents' eyes. One study has shown that although 70 percent of today's mothers had played outside as a child, only 31 percent of them allow their own children to do so today (Mainella, Agate, & Clark, 2011).

Many parents view outdoor play as risky or unsafe due to the fear of not knowing what might happen if their children are allowed to play outdoors (Mainella, Agate, & Clark, 2011). As a method to shift the parents' negative perspectives of the outdoor world, a popular technique is to construct natural play areas in spaces where parents feel safe and comfortable for their children to play in (Keeler, 2013). As Keeler suggests, natural play can be integrated in most places such as school grounds or even people's own backyards. Building natural play spaces in these accessible areas provide first-hand experiences for parents and families to see the benefits it can provide for their children. When family members take the time to understand and appreciate the outdoor environment, the chances of children sparking a new interest is much higher (Harris, 2016). Children are given the opportunities to practice using their own judgement and decision-making skills to make the most appropriate and safest choices for themselves.

Conclusion

Throughout the past decade, there have been many research findings that prove outdoor learning and natural play is very beneficial to cognitive, emotional and physical health. Unstructured play provides the freedom for children to use their imagination and creativity to roleplay, share stories, and cooperate while building or improving personal social skills (Harris, 2016). In contrast to a static playground, in which no equipment or apparati can be manipulated and moved around, natural play will foster stronger problem-solving and risk management skills due to the opportunity to make independent decisions. Re-integrating the experience of nature in a child's life can provide various health benefits from the high intensity

and dynamic physical movement (Keeler, 2013). When children are having fun and enjoying their surroundings, they will pay more attention to the resources that they use in their play and develop their own connections with the natural resources around them. This connection can lead to lifelong participation and appreciation for all that nature has to offer.

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For Every Friend, For Every Fire

By Naomi McIlwraith

Take off your blinders and celebrate
their colour. Fear not the fire
of colour if it is richer than yours.
Revel in the many hues of humanity.
Look to Grandfather Sun for guidance.

kanawâpamihk kicâpâniwâw iskotêw êkwa
ê-kiskinohtahikoyêk

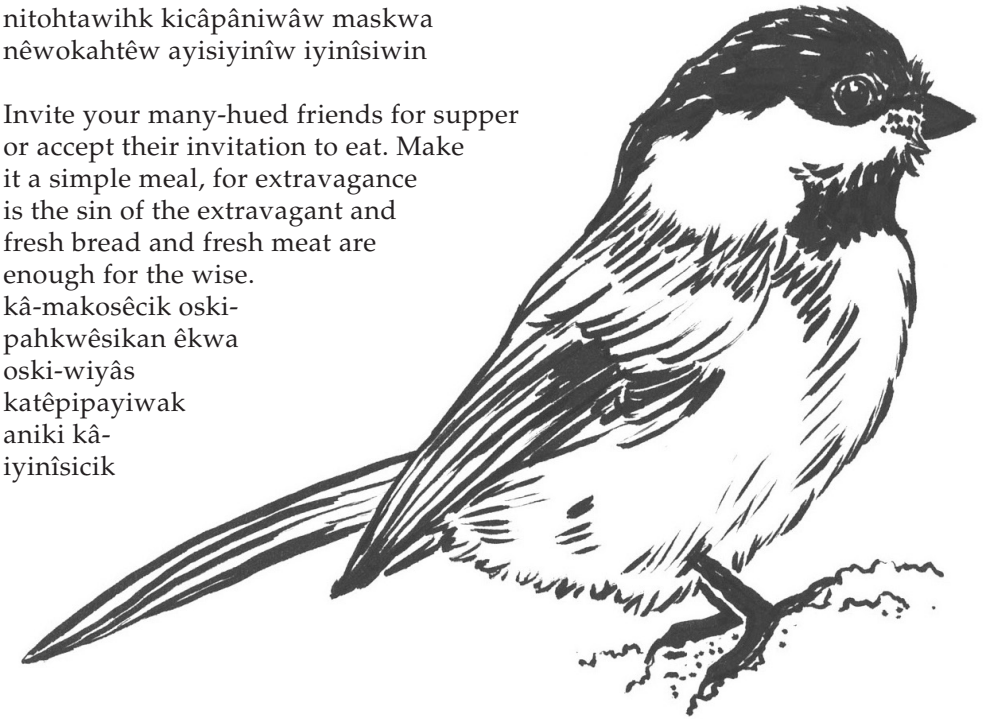
Remember the Old People because they
know where the water is fine and cool.
All people need water and all people
shall have clean water.
Grandfather Thunder Bird will bring you
water.

kikiapêtamâkowâw nipiy kicâpâniwâw
piyêsiw

Do think of the Earth and your place on it.
This fine Earth nourishes us
and we must remember her many gifts.
Notice Earth's many human hues.
Listen to Grandfather Bear's earth wisdom.

nitohtawihk kicâpâniwâw maskwa
nêwokahtêw ayisiyinîw iyinîsiwin

Invite your many-hued friends for supper
or accept their invitation to eat. Make
it a simple meal, for extravagance
is the sin of the extravagant and
fresh bread and fresh meat are
enough for the wise.
kâ-makosêcik oski-
pahkwêsikan êkwa
oski-wiyâs
katêpipayiwak
aniki kâ-
iyinîsicik



For every friend, for every fire
for all the water, and all the earth.
For every breath you breathe dance.
Dance the thank-you dance for Grandfather
Wind.

kahkiyaw ê-yêhyêyêk nîmihitok
kamâciwisimostamâhk kicâpâniwâw
kîwêtin

Naomi McIlwraith lives in Edmonton Alberta (amiskwaciwâskahikan-Beaver Mountain House). She is author of kiyâm, a poetry collection in English and Cree. Naomi has worked as an Historical Interpreter at Fort Edmonton and in 2018 completed her first year of teaching school.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THE COUNCIL OF OUTDOOR EDUCATORS OF ONTARIO PRESENTS:
ONTARIO WILDERNESS LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM
2020
NORVAL OUTDOOR SCHOOL
MAY 8–10
The Ontario Wilderness Leadership Symposium is an annual event organized to support the professional development of emerging wilderness trip leaders in Ontario. This low-cost, three-day symposium will offer attendees opportunities for relevant leadership and skills-based training, a chance to network with others employed in this unique field and explore a variety of potential avenues for future career development. Young adults with experience leading wilderness trips and residing in Ontario are eligible to register to participate in this event.
With support from:
Cabela's
CANADA OUTDOOR FUND
For more information about this event and how to register visit:
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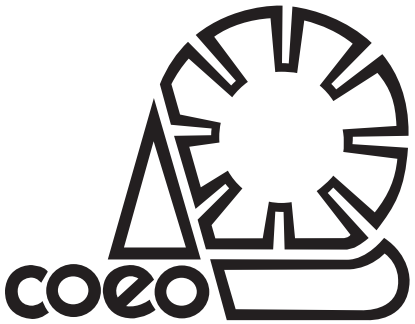

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